

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:344
ANSWERED ON:07.08.2002
INCIDENCE OF BLINDNESS
P.D. ELANGO VAN;PRABHUNATH SINGH

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether target was fixed to reduce blindness from 1.4 to 0.3 percent by 2000 A.D. in the country;
- (b) if so, the achievement made in this regard;
- (c) the action taken/proposed to be taken to achieve the above target; and
- (d) the time by which the above target is likely to be achieved?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA)

(a) to (d) : A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.344 FOR ANSWER ON 07.08.2002

National Programme for Control of Blindness was launched in 1976 with the goal of reducing the prevalence of blindness from 1.4% to 0.3%. Survey in 1986-89 indicated that prevalence of blindness has marginally increased from 1.38% (1971-74) to 1.49%. Cataract was identified as the major cause of blindness contributing 80% of blindness.

Main reasons for increase in prevalence were inadequate allocation of funds resulting into low performance of cataract surgery, inadequate number of eye surgeons in rural areas and inadequate facilities for eye care services.

Additional financial resources were sought from the World Bank to control blindness due to cataract since 1994-95. Major outcome of the project were 337 new eye care facilities in Government and non-government sectors, nearly one thousand eye surgeons trained in modern Intra Ocular Lens implantation and rise in rate of cataract surgery from 150 to 370 operations per lakh population. Recent survey indicates that prevalence of blindness has reduced from 1.49% to 1.1% in 2001-02 and cataract being the cause of blindness reduced from 80% to 62.6%.

A Plan of Action for Xth Plan (2002-07) has been formulated to prevent and control blindness due to cataract, refractive errors, glaucoma, childhood and corneal blindness and other eye disorders. The plan is based on recent findings of the National Survey and strategies advocated by WHO under 'Vision 2020: The Right to Sight Initiative'. It is expected that the prevalence of blindness would be reduced to 0.3% by the year 2020.